

Year B 10th Sunday after Pentecost Proper 12 28 July 2024

Feeding 5000 John 6

Sermon Texts

John 6:1

Sometime after this, Jesus crossed to the far shore of the Sea of Galilee (that is, the Sea of Tiberias), and a great crowd of people followed him because they saw the signs he had performed by healing those who were ill.

John 20:30,31

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

I hope you saw some of the Olympic games opening ceremony. Fireworks, laser displays, Celene Dion, Lady Ga Ga, high wire acts, French revolution plays, all the nations on display, the lighting of that giant cauldron.

Pretty spectacular!

If Jesus were to appear with a single picnic basket and proceeded to hand out thousands and thousands of bread rolls and fish, he would fit right in.

The greatest show on earth!

In Jesus day people came from everywhere – to see Jesus perform miracles – for them it was the greatest show on earth.

They came to receive.

They came to be a part of this miracle man's Journey.

Is this what it's all about – a miracle – feeding 5000 people with a few bread loaves and a few fish?

This is about as far as we go in Sunday School.

You know at the end of John it says: "Jesus performed many other miracles" – but this one and just a few select others are written down so that we may believe that Jesus is Lord.

So, why was this miracle written down for us?

We are by lake Tiberius, by the city of Tiberius (which still stands today).

The city of Tiberius was built by Herod to honour Tiberius the Ceasar of Rome.

So, we are in Tiberius country.

In case you don't know these coins say it all: *Tiberius Augustus Divus* – Tiberius Augustus is God.

Like the Egyptian Pharoah's believed they were God – so did the Caesars of Rome. Tiberius Augustus is God!

You will remember when Mary and Joseph had to track all the way to Bethlehem to “pay their tax”.

It had nothing to do with tax. It actually says they had to go to the census office and offer a **tribute to Tiberius** – one of these coins.

It wasn't about taxes – it was about humiliating the Jewish people.

It meant people like Mary and Joseph had to buy a coin which says Tiberius is God – and give it to the census officer and have their name crossed off.

Mary and Joseph and all the other Jewish people were forced to say “Tiberius is God.”

This was life in and around the sea of Tiberius.

Herod was Tiberius' leader in this area.

Funny enough Herod also believed he was God.

When Herod spoke publicly the people were forced to respond by saying, *“this is not the voice of a man but the voice of God.”*

This is the man who had John the Baptist's head cut off.

Mathew and Mark describe Herod as a “Shadow of death”.

Behind his back people called him Herod the maniac.

Jesus called him Herod the fox.

The gospels say that when Herod got upset everyone became silent and worried sick at what he might do.

Tiberius unless was not a tourist destination.

Crime was high, hunger was high, food riots were common and worst of all Herod was there.

Josephus the historian says the people of Tiberius are *“a promiscuous rabble, made up of poverty-stricken people from any and all places of origin.”*

There was always trouble.

And when things getting out of hand what would Herod do??

Herod (god/king) would hand out **bread and fish**.

Jesus hands out bread and fish – Jesus doesn't kill, he doesn't instill fear, Jesus loves, off course the people wanted to make Jesus their God and King.

It's not so much that Jesus could provide free meals - Herod could do that – it was that what Jesus did, and what Jesus said, that made them wonder if he was the Messiah.

Remember this miracle was recorded so that **we**, may know Jesus is the one true Lord and King.

This is for us not them.

Jesus' bread and fish are different.

There are leftovers like they've never seen before.

The beggars, the hungry, the sick, the poor, those who only know Tiberius as God – those who only know starvation and oppression, now see Jesus as God of grace and love and abundance.

They asked for so little and receive so much.

Remember this is written for us – **and so is this – written at the exact same time:**

Jesus asks his disciples who do the people say I am?

“They think you are John the Baptist, or Elijah, or a one of the prophets brought back from the dead”.

Then Jesus says, *“who do you say I am”*

Peter says *“you are the Christ the son of the living God”*

The first confession of faith – the first human proclamation that Jesus is Lord.

And it didn't just come from that feeding miracle.

It came from them seeing Tiberius god and Jesus God side by side.

One who acts from evil.

The other who acts from Love.

This story is our story – our history – Jesus is revealing he is Lord of all:

In believing we have life – and eternal life.

Pastor Paul and I have been sitting here there and every-where lately with sick people, with dying people.

It's not misery – it is a joy to share hope, it is a joy to talk about dying the taboo subject.

It's a Joy because most of the people we sit with believe that Jesus is Lord.

This is what it is all about.

I can't help noticing the parallels here between Tiberius and Jesus, and Pharoah and God.

God recued his people from slavery and gave them bread in the desert – all the while being destined for the promised land.

Jesus saved his people from the slavery of sin, and gave them himself, the bread of life, all the while promising them the eternal promised land.

I cannot separate any miracle of Jesus from the last verse of John.

These few miracles are recorded so that we may know Jesus is our Lord and God and by believing in him we may have life – eternal life.

These few miracles are written down that we may have faith.

Paul says that “righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

We know we have all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” When we place our faith in Jesus, we believe in Him, and God makes us right with him. To have faith in Jesus is to reject all other ways of salvation.

We trust in Jesus alone. *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved”* ([Acts 4:12](#)).

Thank God for John who chose to record for us the miracles that help us believe Jesus is Lord and Saviour.

The poor people at the time of the feeding of the 5000 and Jesus’ walking on water did get confused.

After their bellies were full of bread and fish, after they had seen Jesus walk on water they ask this unusual question:

“Jesus what miraculous sign will you do for so that we can believe in you?”

Had they not seen enough?

Then even stranger they ask, “what works do you want us to do for you so we can believe”?

What did Jesus think?

Here is his answer, John 6:29: *“It is God’s work – that you believe in the one he has sent”*.

Jesus what do we have to do? You don’t have to do anything God works faith in you.

No more miracles to make us believe – now God works faith in us by the Holy Spirit.

He does this through words about Jesus.

Never forget Romans 10:17: *Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.*

All this interplay between Tiberius and Herod and Herod and Jesus – and bread and fish. Is to show us that Tiberius, or any other imitator is not God – but Jesus is Lord and God and King.

Believe this and take a new look at yourself.

You are fully equipped for the ministry of grace and forgiveness.

You have the invitation of God to be his ambassadors – his ministers of reconciliation.

No matter what you think of women’s ordination – you are all ministers of reconciliation, male and female – boy or girl.

Because we believe – thank you John for those words about Jesus.

Lord, we believe you are our Lord and King – equip us to serve God’s people, God’s creation along side you. Amen.